

D E T R O I T M A S T E R P L A N

PLANS FOR A FINER CITY...
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CIVIC CENTER,
CULTURAL CENTER
& RIVERFRONT

DETROIT CITY PLAN COMMISSION
CITY OF DETROIT

CIVIC CENTER

FUNCTIONS TO BE SERVED AND FACILITIES REQUIRED

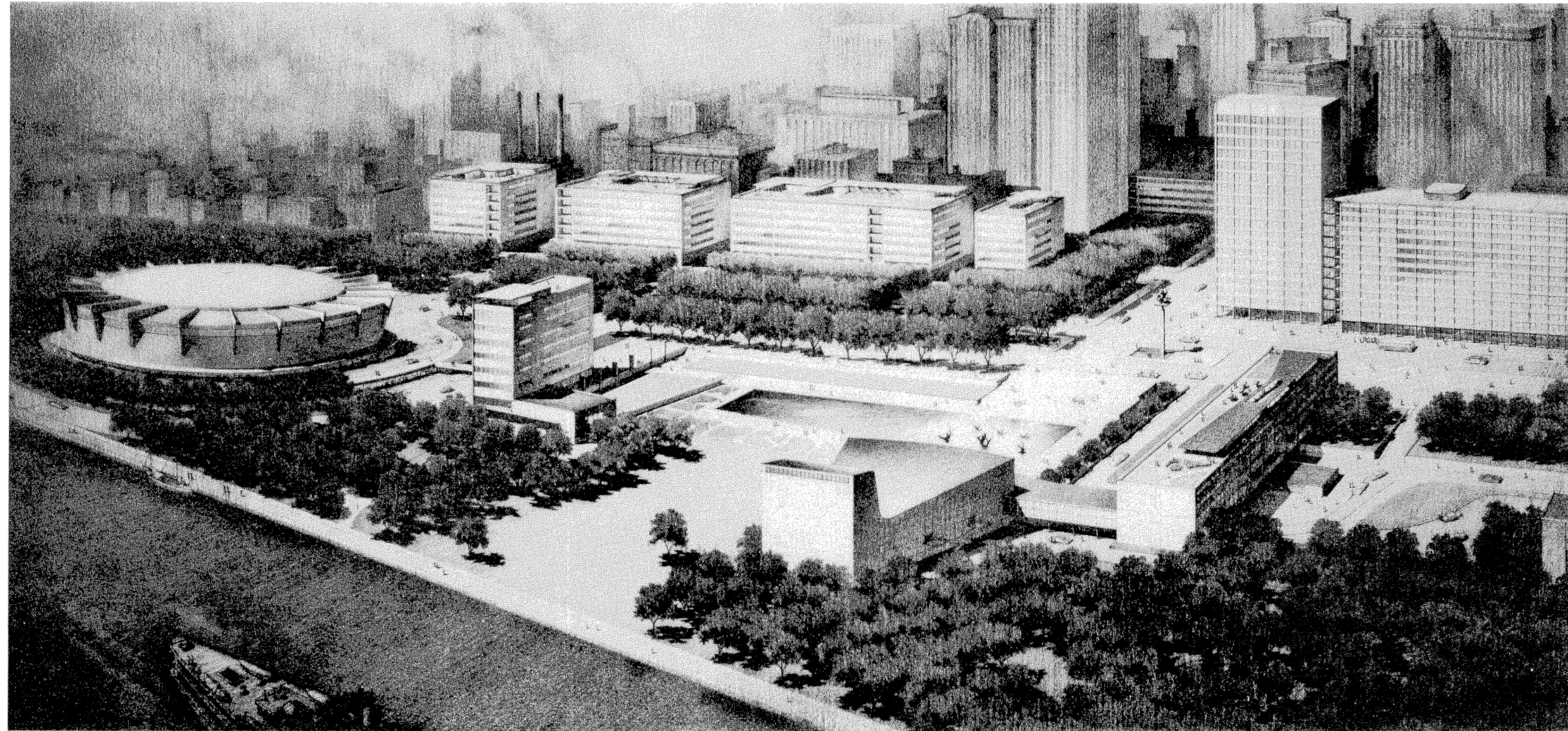
From earliest times cities that have reached cultural maturity have sought to arrange their governmental buildings in orderly, visually effective architectural groups. The idea of a Civic Center for Detroit has risen out of the recognition that this city also needs a group of public buildings symbolic of its social and political democracy.

The administration of public affairs is influenced to a considerable degree by the efficiency and convenience of the public buildings in which public affairs are conducted. The first purpose of the Civic Center plan is to designate a convenient central location where the administrative offices of government—whether city, county, state or federal—can be brought together.

A second function of the Civic Center is to provide a place for larger civic affairs in which many people can be brought together. For this purpose, the plan has been designed with meeting halls of various sizes grouped around a central plaza dedicated to public use as a fitting memorial to the veterans of the two World Wars.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

In order to achieve harmony and a high degree of architectural excellence in the Civic Center, the City Plan Commission has sought the advice of Detroit's architects on the design of the center. In the early stages of development of the Civic Center plan, Suren Pilafian served as consultant to determine the buildings to be included and their general location. In January, 1947 the Detroit chapter of the American Institute of Architects appointed an architectural advisory committee to assist the City Plan Commission in architectural review of proposed public buildings. This committee, with some changes in personnel, has continued to review plans for treatment of the Civic Center as a whole and of individual buildings within the center. In February, 1947 on recommendation of the architectural advisory committee, the City Plan Commission retained Saarinen and Associates as consultants to prepare a Civic Center design which includes the position and architectural character of buildings and structures, treatment of the plaza and provisions for parking and circulation.



EXTENT AND ELEMENTS

The Civic Center site at the foot of Woodward Avenue on the Detroit River extends to Cass Avenue on the west, Congress on the north and Randolph on the east. It contains 54 acres.

The major governmental building in the plan is a county-city office building east of Woodward running between Jefferson and Randolph to Larned. The plan recommends a multi-storied building two blocks in length. Smaller state and federal office buildings are located to the west of Woodward along Jefferson Avenue.

The area south of Jefferson contains the Veterans Memorial Building, a convention hall and a civic auditorium.

STREET CHANGES

The large landscaped plaza is essentially a square for pedestrians. To serve this function, it must be kept free from automobile traffic. For this reason, streets in the central plaza will be closed.

The section of Jefferson Avenue which passes through the Civic Center site is the lower portion of the downtown expressway loop. Consequently it will carry some through traffic and be a general point of access to the expressway system in addition to being a terminal point for traffic destined to the center. For the present Jefferson will remain a surface street. It will be widened 90 feet on the south side to a total width of 210 feet. The ultimate design of Jefferson will depend on which traffic functions are found most important.

Wayne Street provides a connecting link between the convention hall and Washington Boulevard. The plan recommends widening of Wayne from 50 to 80 feet between Michigan and Jefferson.

Randolph Street at the eastern end of the Civic Center provides access to the County-City Building and the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel. The plan recommends widening Randolph to a 120 foot boulevard width from the tunnel entrance north to Larned.

EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

The general location and arrangement of buildings in the Civic Center is shown on the accompanying map. Existing buildings are shown in dark blue. Proposed buildings and sites of other possible public or private buildings are shown in light blue.

Shaded portions of the map represent the future pattern of blocks and streets. Areas in white consist of streets, parking areas and connecting service drives. Dash lines on the map indicate the present property lines where streets are to be closed, widened or otherwise modified.

A proposal to extend the Civic Center area westward to Third in order to provide additional space for an exhibition hall and related facilities is under consideration as this publication goes to press. Since the development plan for this proposed extension is not ready for approval at this date, the plan is published as previously approved by the Common Council.

CULTURAL CENTER

FUNCTIONS TO BE SERVED AND FACILITIES REQUIRED

In its Public Library, Institute of Arts, Historical Museum, International Institute, Rackham Memorial Building and Wayne University, Detroit has the nucleus of a center to nurture the cultural life of the entire city. These are growing institutions, some with buildings under construction and others with plans for expansion.

In addition, there are a number of cultural organizations in Detroit which have less advanced plans for museums or related institutions. These include a Hall of Man, a Museum of Natural History and a Planetarium. The Cultural Center Plan has been drawn showing sites of a suitable size and location for all of these institutions.

The cultural center plan is directed to two principal objectives:

1. To encourage the grouping of further museums, scientific and cultural institutions in the vicinity of the existing cultural center group.
2. To create through skillful arrangement of buildings, harmony of design, judicious street closing and provision of off-street parking, an appropriate physical setting for the educational and cultural activities of the center.

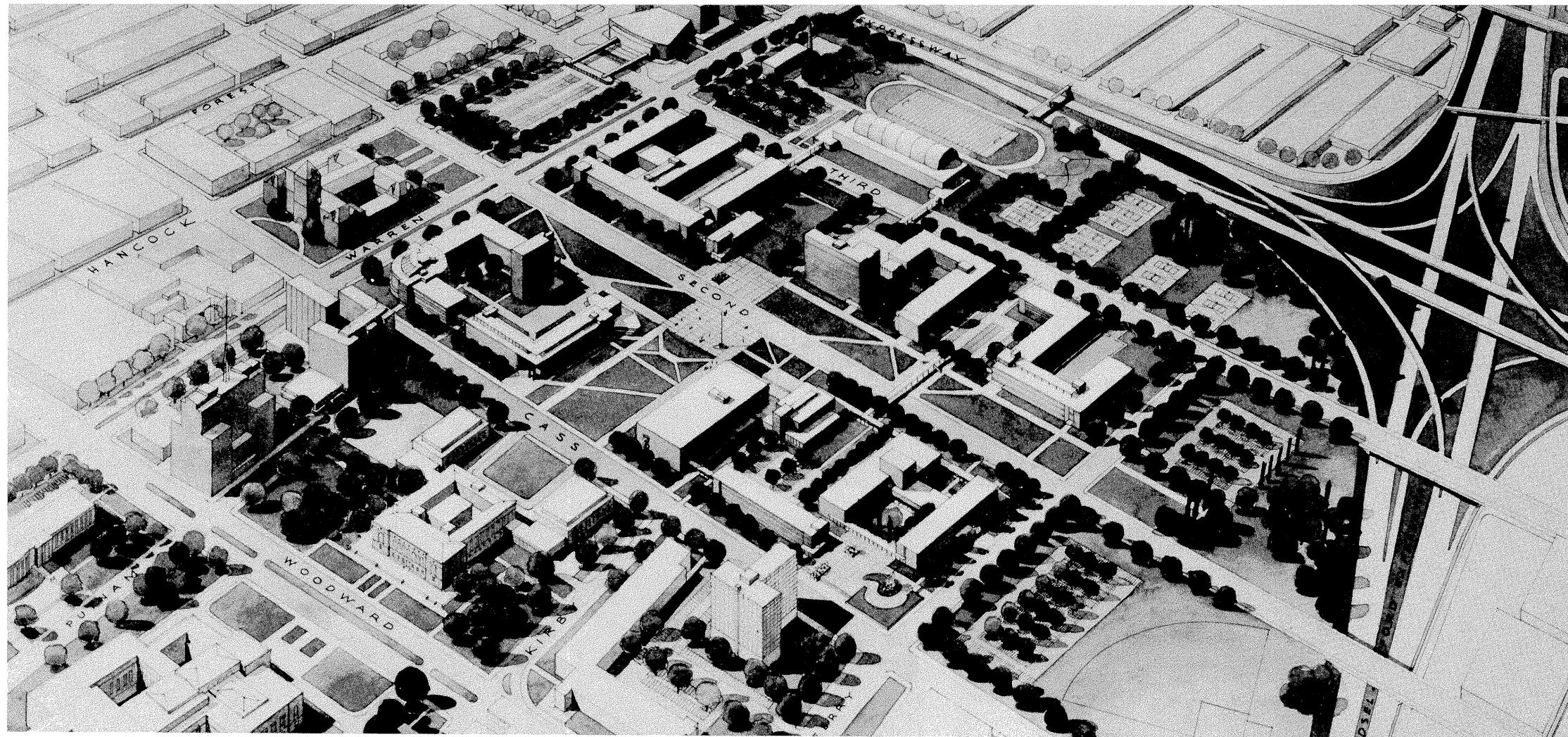
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

As the expansion programs for Wayne University and the cultural institutions in Detroit's Cultural Center began to take shape, considerable civic interest was expressed in the importance of integrating the various plans so that a finer architectural relationship of the whole group could be achieved. In 1944, the City Plan Commission retained Buford Pickens as an architectural consultant to recommend a desirable general design and treatment for both public and private buildings proposed within the area.

The general plan as recommended by the consultant incorporated a site plan for Wayne University developed by Suren Pilafian, architect for the University. This plan with modifications was subsequently adopted by the City Plan Commission as the general development plan for the Cultural Center.

EXTENT AND BOUNDARIES OF THE AREA

The cultural center area lies on both sides of Woodward Avenue between Warren on the south and the Edsel Ford Expressway on the



north. It extends to the Lodge Expressway on the west and Brush on the east. The university site consists of 111 gross acres lying east of the John C. Lodge Expressway, south of the Edsel Ford Expressway and bounded on the east by Cass, on the south of Hancock. The library-museum group consists of 66 acres bounded by Cass, Ferry, Brush and Warren.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

Principal buildings of the Wayne University campus are within the blocks bounded by Third, Ferry, Cass and Warren. The university library near the center of the site faces the Public Library across an open mall.

Science and engineering buildings are grouped at the south end of the campus along Warren. Buildings to house the arts and humanities are grouped to the north along Ferry.

Related facilities which will draw non-student traffic, requiring additional off-street parking, are placed outside this central campus.

The museum group similarly forms a rectangle with the greatly enlarged Institute of Arts in the center. All buildings face inwards towards the Institute of Arts across broad landscaped areas.

The Historical Museum and International Institute along Kirby will face south towards the Public Library and Institute of Arts. Along the eastern edge a Hall of Man, natural history museum and planetarium form a group enclosing a long mall which is to be developed as a quiet park area free of any streets.

STREETS AND CIRCULATION

The circulation needs for pedestrians and automobile traffic present conflicting requirements. A desirable treatment of both the university and museum groups involves enclosure of relatively large malls or squares which will be freed from automobile traffic. The cultural center is unfortunately crossed by a network of streets which carry north-south through traffic.

The plan recommends closing of a number of minor streets for greater safety and convenience of pedestrian movement within the center. While it is evident from the site plan that closing of Second Boulevard and Third would materially help in integrating the university campus, these streets will be left open as interim thoroughfares until after the completion of the Lodge and Hastings Expressways. Whether they can be closed in the future must be determined on the basis of traffic needs when the Lodge Expressway is in operation.

EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

Existing buildings to be retained and incorporated in the university and museum groups are shown in dark blue and proposed buildings are shown in light blue. Other nearby or related buildings are indicated in black outline.

Shaded portions of the map represent the future pattern of blocks and streets. Areas in white consist of streets, parking lots and connecting service drives. Dotted lines indicate present property lines where streets are to be widened or eliminated.

RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES

The riverfront plan proposes development of the riverfront from East Grand Boulevard to the eastern city limits for recreational, residential and industrial uses. The plan proposes to give public access to the waterfront in three recreational areas to be interconnected by a pleasure drive. The plan leaves an industrial area at the terminal of the Detroit Terminal Railroad which should be retained for those industries which need a waterfront location.

EXTENT AND BOUNDARIES OF DEVELOPMENT AREA

The riverfront development area consists of 560 acres lying along the Detroit riverfront between West Grand Boulevard and Alter Road. The northern limits of the development are Jefferson Avenue from East Grand Boulevard to Marquette Drive; Freud Avenue to a point north of the east boundary of the Detroit Edison Company; thence diagonally southeast and east along the north line of Lenox; east from the foot of Lenox to Lakewood; and from Lakewood along the canal to Alter Road.

The area extends for 3.5 miles on the harbor line.

RECREATIONAL ASPECTS

Three major areas have been designated for recreational development:

Gabriel Richard Park, extended southwest of Belle Isle Bridge to include the Detroit Michigan Stove Company property, and with the harbor line extended east to Owen Park, is suitable primarily as a landscaped area and reviewing ground for motor boat races.

With the harbor line extension this recreation area will contain approximately 80 acres.

Extension of Memorial Park eastward to St. Jean will provide 250 acres (including Water Works Park) suitable for varied recreational use. Under the plan the area will contain three marinas: one at the Memorial Park inlet and one east of Water Works Park and one in Greyhaven. Other private boat yards will remain for storage and servicing pleasure boats.

Extension of Algonquin Park from Conner Creek to the Marine Hospital provides a 230 acre recreational area for general recreational uses and expansion of pleasure boat facilities.

Algonquin Park will be developed as a park and playfield area with an outdoor swimming pool. Greyhaven and the mouth of Fox Creek are suitable for development of public marinas. The Bayview Yacht Club and Clairpointe Marina which border Algonquin Park on the west are compatible with the general development plan and will continue present operations.

THE PARK DRIVE

A 3.5 mile park drive from West Grand Boulevard to Alter Road is intended both to connect and give access to the recreation areas on the riverfront and to serve as a pleasure drive joining with the Lake Shore Drive.

It is proposed to extend the harbor line approximately 400 feet into the river south of the present harbor line from Belle Isle Bridge to Memorial Park.

The drive would bridge the Memorial Park Marina with a clearance of 15 feet and the Fisher Boat Works with a clearance of 20 feet. The route across the Berry Subdivision lines along Dwight Street.

After crossing the Water Works Park, the drive is aligned south of Freud Street to the Detroit Edison property where it rises on a viaduct to cross the railroads serving this industrial district. The drive then veers southeastward across the north end of Algonquin Park, over Greyhaven, to connect with Windmill Pointe Drive at Alter Road.

The Riverfront drive is proposed as a semi-limited access parkway drive with interconnections at major thoroughfares. Three 11 foot moving lanes in each direction separated by a planting strip will present a cross section similar to the central portion of the expressways.

RESIDENTIAL

Bordering on the riverfront are some of the finest locations for homes and apartments in the city. These possibilities have been recognized in such residential developments as the Whittier and River Terrace.

In addition to the apartment area around the Whittier and the single family area in the Berry Subdivision, the plan shows the area east of Memorial Park as suitable for apartment development.

Apartment structures along the riverfront should be well spaced so that their landscaped grounds will be, in effect, a part of the park development.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

In the formulation of the riverfront plan, the present industries along the riverfront were studied to determine which used the riverfront location either for transportation or for industrial processes. On the basis of this study the plan proposes retention of industrial and commercial use within the Conner Creek area from St. Jean to Conner occupied in part by the Detroit Edison Company.

EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

Areas proposed for public recreational or pleasure drive development are shown in green on the accompanying map. Semi-public recreation areas are in light green. Related industrial, commercial or residential areas are shaded in grey.